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The Misty Day.

POEMS BY

HENRY CROCKER.

SAN FRANCISCO.

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The Misty Day

Poems

by

LENORE CROUDACE

SAN FRANCISCO

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Misty Day	5
The Drop of Blood in the Heart	8
The Asp	10
Unadorned	13
Ten Sonnets	16—25
The Wail of the Transports	26
Lights of St. Vincent's	29
Betrayal in Vain	32
The Actor's Lesson	34
The Ocean's Reply	45
San Francisco Destroyed	47
Freedom Once More	51
In Humility's Vale	53
Planting the Flag	55
The Voice of the Infant Dead	58
The Welcome of the Flowers	61
Cowardice and Courage	65
Sentiment	68
From Beyond the Tomb	71
The Wooing of the Urn	76
The Appeal	79
The Leap	83
The Vision of the Key	88

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The Misty Day

Oh, that my wish were charged with shot like a gun
To hit that bird that sings in yonder tree,
And send its aim direct like rays from the sun,
That burn their way to diamond spray in the sea!
But I have no weapon to pierce the fog and night,
And only a dreadfull dimness in place of sight.

One moment I feel it glow like flame of the day,
This wish that flutters, burns and beats in my breast,
All crimson, vermilion, elusive as a fay.
And strange against the morn' in sapphire dressed.
Then over me rolls the white, thick cloak of the haze,
I can light no lamp to clear my misty daze.

What is a wish that it leaps along my veins,
A headless thing that plunges towards a brain,
While on my spirit still its impulse gains
A strength insisting, smarting like a pain?
It strives and strives with all its tiny might
To bring before my curtained gaze a light.

The fog is gray, the mist now black, now white,
No sailor's lantern pierces this veil dense wound
About my head, condemned the clouds to fight,
But through the thickness comes a mournful sound,
The fisher's horn that winds its dismal note
Along the shore where swings in fright his boat.

The bells that ring to save the ships out there,
Scream out a music weird that tells no tale,
And holds for melody's waiting ear, no air;
Yet they draw my wish with them to play the gale.
And still the mist is round my idiot sense
To every call of love so darkly dense.

Is it love that trembles mute and unobserved
Its fragrance quivering on the choking breeze,
While every other thought from it has swerved
To make a royal way its heart to please?
Oh wish, oh hope, oh light and life and love,
Combine in one and soar the clouds above!

But the mist and haze and doubt roll on again,
While still my wish in the void is keen and lone,
A vibration voiceless sad, imprisoned, vain,
Too uncertain e'en to cry aloud its moan.
I am lost in the desolate dark of the long, long night,
And love, too, perhaps, is lost on a distant height.

Oh, that my wish were an arrow gold, just tipped
With an edge of steel to cut the toughest heart,
I would send it flying swift until it ripped
The veil from all the blinding fools that part.
Dear love from love that dearer grows in might,
When from its view is shut God's holy light.

Oh, Heaven of Heavens, if I could just once but see
Behind the clouds, the mist, the fog and the fear,
And all the anguish of suspense on me,
And all the things without a meaning clear!
But I wander on with sightless eyes downcast,
And never know if near me love has passed.

The Drop of Blood in the Heart

The drop of blood too much that ripples red
Along the life imprisoned in my veins,
Has strayed from its wonted place within my head,
And all my love of thought exhausted wanes.

Where then has gone the tiny ruby globe?
Is it in my fingers' strained and nervous grasp,
That yearns to give to all the world a robe
The bare and ugly spots of earth to clasp?

Or is it in my feet that long to run,
Like hoofs of flying steeds across the plain,
To catch the fitful rays of revealing sun
That through the prism of air forever strain?

Is it fighting like a tiger in my jaw,
Too violent to rest an instant calm,
But strong of tooth just snarling at the door,
Of speech that seeks in vain a soothing balm?

I probe its hiding-place and know at last
From one chance word a foe flings in my face,
Just where the crimson globule now has cast
Its might and where to find its bloody trace.

She said: the one I loved the most, the least
Loved me, for he had sold me to the thieves,
Betrayed me for the price of an idle feast,
And turned hope's blossom shoot to withered leaves.

For a moment darkness falls like death's own pall,
The stab acute has touched the vital core,
Oh, now I know where drops that red, red ball,—
My *heart* is sinking in excess of gore.

Did Desdemona feel a pain so sharp,
When the Moor's black fingers crushed her slender throat?
The organ strains and shrieks like a frenzied harp,
Played by a storm whose winds on murder gloat.

I smother and the voice has left my lips,
How could you be so cruel, sweetheart mine,
And give to my fond love of you such whips
Of scorn, in stifling blood my name to sign?

The clot has passed the frail, thin channel through,
I am not dead, but wondering like a ghost
Returned from death's black misty bourn, how you
Could send the drop where it would hurt the most.

The Asp

Last year when I was dead,
With icicles on my head,
I looked with ghostly eyes from out my grave,
Upon the living world,
In folly's eddies hurled,
Like tattered sea-weed in a slimy cave.

I wake with summons sharp,
Strong hands upon my harp
Of being strike a chord that cleaves the air.
Invisible waves disturbed,
Enchanting sound uncurbed,
Make melodies for which the angels care.

Is this new life I feel,
My heart's consent to steal,
From the frozen waste of empty, barren days?
"March on", out loud it cries,
"The howling winds arise,
The pageant of throbbing millions waits your gaze."

My nerves become an asp,
With coils that long to clasp
Around the tree of knowledge waving high,
With gorgeous leaves immense,
And foliage velvet dense,
Into the zenith where the gods are nigh.

This gift must come from thee,
Like lightning it darts to me,
My pulse inflaming with the thing called will,
Old uses to despise,
Dear freedom's hope to prize,
The destroyers of the innocent to kill.

It begs, nor rest, nor stop,
Disdains the weakling's prop,
Advancing like the river's endless flow,
Or perfect circle round,
The wisest to confound
In efforts its beginning or end to know.

If will and wish were one,
My task would at once be done,
I would send this jumping, electric force of mine,
Across the sandy plains,
Or where the sunset wanes,
To reach its goal in that great heart of thine.

Since barriers high are raised,
And all our senses dazed,
By gold that with deceit conspires to slay
Each cherished thrill we feel,
We can but bravely deal
The avenging blow on fate that blocks our way.

Imprisoned in a cage,
In helpless, hopeless rage,
My will galvanic still can mock and scorn
Frail men without an aim,
To tyranny still tame,
Rambling indeterminate, forlorn.

Intense, I plunge in vain,
Repeat my wild refrain,
That tingling life can not be meant to sting:
Poor death is far too meek,
In the asp a rebel seek,
The serpent silent, wise, towards love to spring.

Unadorned

When God in Nature speaks how speaks He best?
In fragile flower rare that hangs its head?
In mighty winds that sweep from ocean's breast?
Or in the jungle heat where wild beasts tread?

The query of an idle dinner hour,
From every guest a different answer drew,
With reverent thoughts upraised one looked for Power,
Another worshiped Light and varied hue.

"You have not touched creation's loveliest work,"
One cried with eyes that swam in beauty's bath,
"Where does the thought divine unquestioned lurk,
To make from high to low a sunbeam's path?"

"Where speaks the voice like whirling spheres in rhyme,
Our ears to soothe with tones of peace benign?
A woman is the noblest work of Time,
Without her aura, all other claims resign."

At once like living mind the mirror gleamed,
With pictures of the women seated there,
Reflected bright and white their diamonds beamed,
And flowers stirred the ripples of their hair.

The mirror begged from them an answering glance,
No woman the challenge dared upright to meet,
'Till one applied unto herself the lance,
And said: "In us not God, but art, you greet."

"No woman lives in Nature's pristine mold,
We all are creature's of a later age,
Seek not in us the curves and colors bold,
That marked our kind before it knew the cage."

But still the artist sought the human face,
That would express God's highest gift to man,
Felt sure that He would not His kind debase,
And give unto the lower type the van.

At last he found her stretched upon the sand,
Of self unconscious gazing on the bay,
Where restless rocked the boat her husband manned;
The sinking sun cloud-dimned upon her lay.

Like fine smoke tendrils curling as they please,
Her midnight hair unknown to smoothing brush,
Waved softly as a thought upon the breeze,
While in her eyes one saw the lovelight rush.

Those orbs whose darkness seemed like purple night,
Intense with Italy's three thousand years
Of kindling sun, yet in their glances bright,
Revealed but married love, above all fears.

The contour of her perfect oval cheek,
Enough to drive a sculptor mad with joy,
No praise or flattery had learned to seek,
But softly bent upon her baby boy.

A gown so cheap, almost a rag, it seemed,
Could not conceal a Phidias line of breast,
The column of her throat exposed just gleamed
Like God's first dream of a cylinder as a rest.

As the fisher-lad advanced to take his own,
The artist withdrew, but praised his star
That with loveliness as guide to him had shown,
A face that art had never tried to mar.

On tip-toe breathless as before a shrine,
He left the hut that formed the Madonna's home,
Praying she would never know her gift divine,
Unmirrored beauty fit to adorn a dome.

Well, Then Tomorrow

Well, then, tomorrow, love, we meet again,
These were the words my heart's hunger fed,
When through the midnight maze your spirit led,
A zephyr's murmur mid the graves of men,
Whose fruitless lives but helped them on to die.
The thought of you my every pulse inflames;
Entangled deep in mystic doubt, yet aims
My life towards you, and still, rapt sweet, I cry,
Oh give to me that fairy morrow's glow
When every thunder-cloud of woe will fade
Into the pageant of the sun you made
By a fancy rare all conquering high and low.
Always I sadly yearn towards that bright day.
The hours like ice-bound ages pass away.

Thine Eyes

How can I try to paint those eyes of thine?
How put in words the splendor of their gleam?
I can but catch their beauty's magic beam,
And whisper low their glory is divine.
To liken them to jewels, oh, for shame!
What diamond ever could so burn and pierce
Or radiate a brilliancy splendid fierce,
Like unto a God-sent shaft of flame?
The stars abashed in silence creep away,
Their secret but dead nature's gaseous shimmer,
A copy faint of the transendent glimmer.
That in thine eyes makes endless burning day.
Oh, lamps so strong and rare, will you not light
The poor and stricken world to clearer sight?

Contrast

Are many lives so chill and bare and drear,
So starved for want of breezes from the sky,
Compelled to live below with soul on high,
As this cold heart of mine when none is near,
To tell me that per chance you love me, dear,
And that amid the waste-lands dark that lie
In sickly swamps where marsh-birds feebly fly,
One star of regal love can distance fear?
Perhaps it is that duller looks the sod,
And heavier is the weight of leaden cloud,
By contrast with your power, rare and proud;
Against the blaze of light, the shadows nod.
But this I know to be forever true:
My dreams, my hope, my life, are all for you.

Half A Heart

The world, a golden globe, in sunlight basks,
Too dazzling bright for my poor tired eyes,
And thought that diamonds' splendor still defies,
When e'en their gleam each frightened moment masks.
Yet, who am I that begs instead a heart,
A wafted breath of love from o'er the mist
Of courts and empires simply made to part
From me the brow my soul has kissed?
Then must I share with throngs of battling men,
And creeds and kingdoms wildly, sorely tossed,
The love that clasped my being's tendrils when
I saw you first and never dreamed the cost?
One-half your heart is better far than none,
Come back, come back, you still will find me won.

Damnation

They tore me bleeding from your arms and cast
My body on the jagged rocks below
The cliff so high where I yearned with you to go,
And left me there to breast the surf that past
In blinding torrents of swirling spray.
The waves of fury bruised and stung my face,
Nor could my utmost force against them brace;
In brutal grip, I helpless, hopeless lay.
Far out the sea shone calm and cool and deep,
I stretched my arms to reach the death it held,
Ten thousand grinning fiends my purpose felled,
Denied to me the rest of that dark leap.
And still I dreamed of bliss remote, yet near,
While in the chaos dim, I saw the demons leer.

The Revealing

Her face took on the look of one resigned
To failure of the hope her ardor craved,
For youth had slipped away down pathways lined
With weeds that never once a flower waved.
Beyond dear death that flew from her swift chase
Was it true there lay a Ressurrection land?
When earth would not vouchsafe an instant's grace
Of yearning love sweet-faced with out-stretched hand,
Were not the thoughts of Heaven a myth fine-spun,
And woven of the frailest web of lies?
Her heart close-guarded like a cloistered nun,
Was a bird long dead that surely could not rise.
But, oh, the fluttering of its trembling wings,
When love at last revealed its lyric sings!

A Message

Oh, why this sudden trembling of my frame,
This quivering tug on heart and brain held high?
As lightning flame God-sent from dusky sky
To tell of wrath divine triumphant came,
As magnet's pull on every bar of steel
That helpless lies until the current burns
Its way of life to atom's heart and turns
To use the mass inert, e'vn so I feel
A summons new my inmost being shake.
Last night I dreamt that I had joined the dead,
The somber sad dark spirits forward led,
In mazes drear where throbs the eternal ache.
But now revived I wake, the heavens appear,
The glowing clouds have told me you are near.

Compromise

A sigh between the troubled dreams that mar
The silence of the long, dark Stygian night;
A hope that gleams across a scene so far
Removed from that dull sense called mortal sight,
It scarcely seems a thing of earth at all,
But rather some faint echo of a song
Heard long ago, yet lost like an elfin call,
That clings yet flies from memory's dirge of wrong:
These were the things that stood to me for life,
Filled up a place that love had never known,—
The compromise aerial, light, whose knife
Could cut aside the death-wings downward blown.
Now through the ether rings a piercing shriek,
Not compromise but love's own self to seek.

The Whisper of Hope

To-day it seems so strange I wished to die
Last night when love had fled on ghostly wings
And left me pinioned in the ice while things
Of dark despair hov'ring made heart-drops sigh.
Oh, now fond spirit voices pierce the blue,
The shining cloudlets hold a message ripe
Of rushing rain while larks with tiny pipe
Taste first of heaven the fragant coming dew.
Oh, let me not remember midnight's scream
And terror wild of conquering, killing pain,
The abyss so near I hardly could refrain
From plunging deep into its lurid stream.
But listening now I hear a whisper sweet
Of rapture's music in thy soul to greet.

Unrequited

The velvet bloom that soft on lilies lies,
The down that from the heart of flowers blows,
Is ne'er so sweet and warm as where she sows,
With magic hand the seed of love that ties
Earth's mystery to the soul of upper air.
She sends a throb of fancy, winged, aflame,
To every one who courts the breath of fame,
In halls where music has the tongue of prayer;
Nor ever deigns one instant to forget
The friend who needs the balm of pulsing praise,
The soothing touch that can the languished raise,
In moments when the death-damps rigid set.
Not once repaid for love so lavish, strong,
She dies alone, away from light and song.

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The Wail of the Transports

Another regiment sailed to-day outbound,
For distant ports half way the world around,
Where ancient art and modern enterprise
Meet in a novel tourney, bizarre, profound.

The army transport, huge and white and swift,
Like a mighty swan, with skill the waves to lift,
Swims through the Golden Gate with haughty mien,
So sure of progress, queen of ocean's drift.

And on the land eclipsed and left behind,
The tendrils of a thousand hearts must wind
Their memories with the sadness of farewell,
The mysteries of Time and Space unkind.

A piece of a soldier's life is lived right here,
The sea-wind high and City's hum both near,
Another slice is given to the Gulf,
Or to the sandy plains where Indians leer.

Look, now, it is the Orient, beckoning strong,
That takes our fighting men on voyages long,
To whet their zest with Asia's fables rare,
Or peer into a strange, forgotten wrong.

And though the lovely ship on which they sail
  Steams out like Grecian warrior clad in mail,
Oh, still she bears with her a sad refrain,
  Like the soughing night-winds' shrill and dreary wail.

Will she return from the other side of the globe,
  Or will her soldiers don the Eastern robe,
And lose themselves amid the mosques sublime,
  And find thenceforth their joy in history's probe?

She has gone, has gone, has gone, the breakers cry,
  As her image sinks against the Western sky;
Who knows what death awaits beyond the line,
  Where she disappears from every searching eye?

Can a gunner give away and yet retain
  His heart's most subtle self, divining brain,
Enthusiasm to bear his flag afar?
  Or must his friends lament the cruel drain?

Absorbed in Duty's sultry tropic heat,
  Where Manila's drums so ceaseless, heavy beat,
The warrior has not even time to think
  Of home abiding through the changes fleet.

The years go on like tedious, sleepy snails,
  Working and waiting make such weary tales!
No victory blushes on the tired brow
  Of the man who hopes and yearns till courage fails.

Is it worse to march in swamps and Philippine rains,
  Doubting if one's racking mind is sane,
Than to stay at home and pine for an absent friend,
  A clasp of hand that somehow soothes all pain?

Another regiment came in to-day;
  Smiling, dipping, dimpling in the bay,
The transport hurried through the harbor gates,
  Then shrieked for home like a child that tires of play.

Yellow, thin and gaunt, but ever gay,
  With foreign stride the soldiers make their way
Among familiar scenes, now veiled and strange,
  At home, yet not at home, to their dismay.

They come and go like ebb and flow of tide,
  These transports borne so far o'ver the ocean wide,
The army moves, obedient ever on,
  And hearts from hearts obedient too, divide.

Lights of St. Vincent's

Twilight on land and sea and within the home,
No cloud or sunset story in Heaven's dome;
While Silence wed to mystery on the main
Gives to quiet waves in evening's reign
A peace that threatens with its sombre hue
The eye that seeks in vain a tint of blue;
And in my heart a twilight like a rage,
A scream as if the dark would bring the wage
Of sin and unknown monsters waiting still
To avenge themselves on acquiescent will.
Is life like this a twilight vague and long,
Where nothingness is the enemy most strong
To dull the mind with drug of sad despair,
And lure the weakened will to the tiger's lair,
Where a savage thirst of blood supplies a hope?
Now dim forebodings in the conscience grope,
As darker falls the twilight on the shore,
And every little homestead shuts its door,
For the evening meal within, and fireside talk,
And inner moments queer when fairies walk,

And thrust their tiny noses twixt your plate
And you with presence strong as God-sent fate.
Restless I my face to the window-pane
With hungry spirit the fading light-rays drain.
Oh, the fear of the little sordid rooms,
While night with blackening menace lower looms!
And the prayer for something large and strong and bright,
For a serenade or a flash of lightning white,
Or a heart that dangling on a quivering string
Of telegraph wire, from misery takes its sting!
The blindest eyes that helpless stare on space,
Are not the ones locked in a midnight case,
But those which never find a meaning sweet
In ugly things, or for themselves retreat
From that they would not see, but ever dwell
On the muddy basin of a flower-grown dell.
For look, while yet the gloaming weighs me down,
And all the world takes on an Autumn brown,
A sudden brilliance glimmers in the calm,
As if a spirit lent a friendly arm;
Just the vesper light of the parish church,
But twinkling through the dark their flood-beams search
Into the last recess of my wounded soul.
A thousand prayers their softened accents roll,
From out the humble shrine that kneels to God,
And from the open door, in silence odd,
There come the clustering spirits of the good,

Whose uplifted thoughts become a gleaming wood
Of lovelier trees than mortal eyes can find,
No matter how their curious glances wind
From darkness to light and back again in search
Of something rare to view. St. Vincent's church
Has caught from Heaven's own rays that gild the west,
A charmed being with gauzy air-wings dressed.
While lo! upon the summit of the cross
That golden shines e'en in the sunset's loss,
The evening star imprints its subtle kiss
On sorrow's emblem thus touched to finer bliss
Than simple rapture knows. As twilight falls
To darker night, the home of God yet calls
To smaller homes bereft of love divine.
While in echo ever new the choirs combine
To make the silence rich with music thought,
As to the darkness dazzling light was brought.

Betrayal in Vain

Alone she drooped as a flower culled and left to die,
When neither dew nor rain her stem to fill is nigh.

Cascades that plash o'er barren rocks unseen must yearn
The coy and brilliant tricks of the fountain's spray to learn.

And so her soul that grew quite wild in mountain space
Aspired the lineaments of human kind to trace.

Untouched by gardener's hand her flower of being frail
Sent out its shy perfume while blushed its petals pale.

Her dreams now bent upon the magic thought of friend,
A heart that answered roses to her cheek to lend.

And then one came with footfalls soft as fluffy snow,
And whispered with a silky voice: "I love you so."

With all its purr of soft melodious tones to woo
A fainting heart, the voice no quivering answer drew.

The human face still looked a fantasy of cloud,
That dazzles and allures but wins no spirit proud.

Her eyes that glowed like fireflies in dusky woods at night,
Looked strange and far away as if devoid of earthly sight.

At once a panther bold and timid doe she clung
To hope of love, yet from her all caressing flung.

"Come, place your head upon my breast," the tempter pressed,
"Sleep as those who on a million feathers rest."

That word's rare magic like the potion of a god,
Would seduce a hero from battle to the land of Nod.

A lonely bird exiled from nesting tree or mate,
She listened, swayed, and seemed to run to meet her fate.

The friend quite sure that sweetness is the best decoy,
Now forward pounced to take his prize without alloy:

"No more you walk the desert stretch of blazing sand,
You thirsty soul, we'll walk together, take my hand.

"We'll seal our union with this kiss of living flame,
And share forever side by side the joy of fame."

With arms outstretched the embrace to snatch and to betray
The willing slave, the friend strode out to meet his prey.

He grasped but empty space, for she had gone like mist
Absorbed into the ether there to make her tryst.

The shy wild thing dissolved at touch of treacherous love,
Escaped like hydrogen from earth to the air above.

The Actor's Lesson

A tragedy in one act.

Scene: Sea-beach garden of the Hotel Lenon, California.

Characters:

ALPHONSE, an actor; FORTICO, a murderer;
LOLITA, a haughty Spanish woman; CLINGRAY, a lover.

ALPHONSE: Was ever man so strangely placed as I,
For inspiration longing on my knees,
Bending every nerve for art's dear sake,
While in my brain sits vacancy enthroned?
My head seems empty as a rubber ball
That pressed within the hand becomes as nought;
Or like a queerly fashioned marble dome
So void it knows not even echo's song.
Why ever did I woo the Tragic Muse,
To be so spurned and left upon the strand,
Where forsaken swains beat out their hearts in spleen?
The sea-weed tangled with a broken spar,
And lying dead and dank upon the beach,

Perhaps can feel a mightier thrill than I,
The drifting fragment of a fruitless hope!
To stand upon the stage like sculpture poised,
Above a crowd in rapture so intense,
They seem a unity of speechless praise,
While the actor carries them to lofty flights
Of emotion in the realm of living truth:—
This dream, the beacon-light I strained to see
Through all the cloudland of a youth ill-taught,
Is now upon the troublous verge of day,
Where the awaking mind sees things but as they are.
Am I so thick art cannot pierce me through?
Or is it true that art just filters life,
That we proclaim no truth but that we feel,
And senseless are to every throb not ours?
Must every phrase that curves the actor's lips
Come first from some live burning in the brain?
I rave: dull failure should not make complaint;
It is a nothingness, a silence,—death.
The pure white sand that rims the ocean's edge,
As perfect rest opposed to motion's heat,
Might tempt a poet to a lofty strain,
But I would scarcely gaze upon it twice;
The drama has no need of Nature's play,
And even scorns her loftiest appeal
In color-painting against a sunset sky.
It wants the human agony quite raw,

If men are not too thin and peevish grown,
To feel in this late day a pang sublime.

(Enter Lolita at a little distance.)

In other days that lovely woman there
Would work mad passions of a jealous hate:
To-day one notes the fashion of her gown.

(to Lolita)

Will you pardon me if I speak an honest mind, —
You look so like a Juliet of the stage.

LOLITA (frowning): Your honest mind has wandered far astray,
For Juliet I hold in strict contempt.

ALPHONSE: Why then the beauty of your Spanish face,
Is not a clue to what you feel, but hides
Instead a laughty heart that knows not love;
And to read aright the whims that turn your soul,
The reader needs the key to your cryptogram;
Must translate the fire in your jetty eyes
As inward ice, and give to your oval cheek,
The sharpened lines of angular disdain.

LOLITA: I think you challenge me to a painful choiee,—
Would compel an admission of sweet vanity,
Or rank me with disappointed maids,
Whose blood runs gall, whose lips spill acid bile.
This much I will confess: I love not men.

ALPHONSE: There is nc drama then; a sculptor's hope
You perhaps may be, but you swim not in my ken.

LOLITA: Not if men should love me?

ALPHONSE: Without response?
I have seen men rave before a Roman shrine
Where the imaged Virgin stares with waxen eyes;
I have seen them kiss in frenzied ecstacy
The silent lips of a Madonna of the brush,—
But that would only make a monologue.

LOLITA: How little you can read the human heart,
If the only pang you give to it is love!

(Enter Fortico. Lolita starts.)

FORTICO: I thought to find my lady here aloue.

ALPHONSE: I interrupt? Oh, pardon me, I'll go!

LOLITA (to Alphonse): I pray you stay awhile—I fear him so!

FORTICO: I gain! You confess at last you have a fear?

LOLITA: Only fools can claim exemption from cold fright.
The little-brained go strutting on their toes;
They take a ship in a vengeful storm and smile;
They sit upon a mammoth precipice,

And cry: Behold! No harm can come to me!
A dwarf will freely play with a lion's tail
And only start when he is in its jaws:
While I,—

FORTICO: While you have fear of a simple human man!
And I have nought against you but your face.
A duty hides within my twisted will
To lop off all extremes. You are too fine!
You scarcely seem a thing of every day,
But a being drifted from a rival sphere,
Who aims to excel our planet's simple kind.
Why here we try to be somewhat alike,
No one should leap to overtop the rest.
It is as if in music you had tried
To invent a note one never heard before,
Much higher up than any opera voice,
Or any tone the nicest instrument
Could sound. There competition cannot climb
To follow you. Then must we drag you down.

ALPHONSE: Your argument is strange. What would you do?

(Enter Clingray)

CLINGRAY: Are you then so young you do not know his end?
And have you never met his kind before?

FORTICO: You see he does not know,—his eyes are blank.

LOLITA: A midget who never knows what it is to fear,
Who has never looked cold murder in the face,
And called it by its name; who never fell
Among a tribe of thieves who strangled him
For the gold they knew not how to earn themselves,—
Who never looked with smiling eyes alight
Into the coffin waiting for his corpse!
May he learn like me what it is to have a gift
That stirs such howling wolves of envy's tribe,
They cannot rest until it is extinct!

CLINGRAY: Lolita! Your gift of eye and lip and hair
But keep me kneeling at your feet in awe!

ALPHONSE: I seem to probe a secret newly found.
(to Fortico)
Will you come this way and enlighten me still more?

FORTICO: I think I see in you the proud extreme.
Yes, I will walk with you.

(Exit Alphonse and Fortico)

CLINGRAY: They love you both!

LOLITA: What right have you to ask? I choose my path.

CLINGRAY: What right have I? You feign to be obtuse,
Pretend you cannot read what my eyes proclaim
In letters more distinct than the largest print

That ever spelled a fact on a painted fence?
You cannot see the ocean at your feet,
Whose waves curl towards you with a caress profound:
You cannot see the emerald of the hills,
Or the shadow of the lighthouse on the sand,
If you cannot see my consuming love for you.
Look in my eyes and read the brain behind.
Its every speck is a mirror of your face.
If I walk across the woods and fields of grass,
Each twig and herb but shows your head divine.
I tremble in the darkness of the night,
For though black to every other sight,
My eyes still see you near my troubled couch.
If I bend upon a book you blur the page,
Your haunting, heavenly eyes intruding there.
Lolita, this madness in my veins must cease,—
When will you be my bride?

LOLITA: You should not ask.
You know that I can never be your wife.
Suppose I see your love? Why should I care?
A fire is no novel sight to me,
Nor does men's frenzy tempt me to a sigh,
One never seeks so earnestly for ice
As when an exile in a tropic-land;
And I think I see in you the burning south
That woos the glistening frost of an arctic heart.

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CLINGRAY: It is pretense, — your beauty gives the lie.
If not my desperate self,—then some one else.
See Fortico comes this way.

(Enter Fortico and Alphonse. Alphonse stands at a little distance. Fortico approaches.)

CLINGRAY: He must answer me.
(To Fortico)
Your brow takes on an ugly scowl. What now?

FORTICO: I thought to see you locked in an embrace.
The languor of her eyes would tempt a saint,—
And yet she stands defiant to a kiss!
Such resistance needs the avenging lash,—
The woman claims she is too fine for love,
And can like spirit, disembodied, fly,
On top of adoration's very pulse
I swear she shall not be too fine for us!
For locked within my arms, my lips on hers,
She who spurned real love, shall touch with hate.

(He advances to grasp her.)

CLINGRAY: No, no, if she is taken by assault,
Give me the task. To persuasion deaf, she will yield
To the pressure of my arms. Lolita, speak!

(He advances towards her, so that he and Fortico are both pressing within a few inches of her.)

LOLITA: A moment wait: — if I were condemned to die,
Like an ancient martyr tied to a burning stake,
I should be given one last chance to speak.
Perhaps I seem to you a fragile thing,
Yet I am larger than a world of hate.
I hate you, Fortico, for your envy base,
And you wild Clingray for your passion bold.
This hate is in me like a cosmic force:—
We learn of growth from a modest buttercup,
And light is signified in a firefly;—
A baby lamb can speak of love divine,—
And regal universal hate can speak
In my poor woman's frame. It fills me now
As if it would burst the tissue of my heart.

FORTICO: Lolita, you are sublime! Then kiss or die!

CLINGRAY: The first kiss is mine! Oh, woman of my dreams!

(They both advance to her and catch her in a double embrace, which she resists violently with muffled cries. Alphonse aroused from his position as spectator, advances just as Lolita gives a piercing shriek, and falls in an apparent faint.)

ALPHONSE: You cannot mean to play an earnest part,—
You would not kiss a woman against her will!
This jest has gone too far,—she looks so pale!
I think she faints.

(Clingray takes the limp figure of Lolita in his arms.)

CLINGRAY: Her breath seems almost gone!

FORTICO: Almost! She is quite dead, my simple friends!
The wonder never ceases how men fall
Into the traps I set. You know my game,—
I am a murderer who goes unchecked.
You are so weak,—you follow on my lead.
Farewell. (Exit Fortico.)

CLINGRAY: Oh, merciful God, dare I call on Thee?
It was love that stole from me my power of mind,—
I could not think for the raging, howling flames
That laved me from without and scorched within.
In all the world there is no other maid
To take her place. I killed the fairest thing
The horried earth has known in this late day!

ALPHONSE: I watched the play,—it seemed to me she died
From rage, the anger breaking through her heart.

CLINGRAY: Oh, God! If I could but bring her back to life!
Oh, let me try! Or is this wish a plunge
Towards a madman's doom? I love her precious corpse.
Oh, let me take her with me to my home!
I will talk to her; she will come back; she must!
(Exit Clingray carrying the corpse of Lolita.)

ALPHONSE: Oh, friendly trees and voices of the wind,
Oh, shining strand of pure and silvery beach

That, like the flowing stroke of a perfect brush,
Sweeps from the master painter's supple hand
In an Autumn mood of sweet and careless grace,
Let me bathe my face in your pure balm:
Help me to forget this passion reel.
I longed to see a human drama live, —
And now that one has burst upon my sight,
I would fling myself in Lethe's healing stream,
And erase for aye this hideous twist of hearts.
Oh, once more to poise like a snowy bird
That flies too high to be soiled with human woe,
Once more in solitude to shiver, freeze,
And wonder if our Shakespeare told the truth,
Or simply lost himself in genius' maze.
But never in the span of coming years,
Can I hope to find what I have lost to-day.
No more a dreamer clinging to a myth,
Sweet with the perfume of the dim unknown,
I have learnt at last to act: I am free for art;
And yet, — and yet, — I could have loved her soul,
Have been to her what they could never be,
They whose infamy just crushed her heart,
In one fierce spasm of destroying rage,
Unheeding I stood by, in art's strange trance,
While the pageant of dramatic life swept by.
How bitter I should love her after death!

CURTAIN.

The Ocean's Reply

Weary of hugging an ungrateful land,
The City's dons the view of ocean spanned,
Saying: "Fear not, the sea will yet provide
For all who work by subtle brain or hand."

"The harbor deep, effulgent, lies in the sun,
While sparkling waves against each other run,
Now white, now green, now indigo, they dance,
Their fish electric from stagnation won.

"The passing ships form one great moving chain,
For daily greater speed and vim they gain,
To bind the East and West in fond embrace,
In love far-stretched whose bonds will never wane."

The ocean close beyond the miles of sand
That form the white-rimmed verge of western land,
Shook off its long indifference salt and cold,
And heard the yearning voice of the civic band.

Liberal, strong, the answer rapid came,
From depths of sea the proudest hearts to tame;
Out of the summer skies a deluge burst,
The drops like bullets at our heads to aim.

Oh, beautiful, rich, luxuriant, crystal rain,
You never fell before from out the main,
With such compelling force, such boundless wealth,
To prove that love wins back the noblest gain.

If Drake and Serra could come to life once more,
To view afresh this rediscovered shore,
They would see their dreams fulfilled and wonder why
The years so slowly roll where breakers roar.

Like Venice in her bridal of the sea,
The City's yielding kisses yet will be,
More mystic rare the union ever deep
Pure as thoughts of love from language free.

The flowers that bloom on Buddha's altars far,
Will waft their fragrance unrestrained, no bar
Of anger near to check their mild advance,
Or sweet inspiring dreams of peace to mar.

Come on, oh, welcome rain from ocean's breast,
All wet as naiads we greet you yet with zest,
As symbol of a marriage unalloyed,
Your generous floods are in our hillocks pressed.

San Francisco Destroyed

What portent makes the air of Spring so drear,
When Easter bells wake gladsome sound to hearts
But just released from Lenten rigors sere?
What shadow lurks ev'en where the sunlight darts,
And throws a chill of doom o'er money's marts,
Mocking the smile that breaks on merry lips?
The zephyr of a kindled spirit parts
The throng of singers blithe, and darkly dips
Into the whirl where folly endless pleasure sips.

Oh, restless sleep of sated beauty's bed,
You were so brief that dazzling April night,
Before the dawn that woke with crash so dread,
To break in bits the City's pride, and light
The sky with torch that flamed from every height,
Proclaiming ruin while, rapture-thrilled, each sense
Of man beat high in wonder at his plight.
Pierced through the cloud of fire and smoke so dense,
An awe superb, to hold the world in waiting tense.

What does God mean that thus his wrath he hurls,
From horrid gases of the under-earth?
Poor babes and weaklings helpless, dazed, He whirls

To thoughts far-dreamed, and Hope's primeval birth.
Where noble stone and marble in stately girth,
Reared up proud fronts to tell of commerce gain,
Where flowers wound in every guise of mirth,
Now stands the mammoth funeral pile of pain,
The billowy hills, revealed, but one lamenting stain.

Like cruel Moloch screeching for his food,
The raving fury spread and claimed its own,
Now urged by demon-force, by wind-storms wooed,
It spared no sacred relic old, no stone
Escaped nor gold nor treasure rare; alone
The black and stricken earth, now dumb, points back
To glories past, to art whose ashes moan;
The sacrifice complete for memory's rack,
Now when all sculptured joy the tortured eye must lack.

Here pity tears our vitals through and through,
At waste so sudden, vast, unkind, while still
The endless Why that first in Eden grew
Peeps in and looks on high for sight of Will
So strong the work of toilful years to kill.
Above a ground all withered, shrunk and dead,
The sky now gleams with compensating thrill
Of foamy cloud, gold-lined, deep heart's blood red,
The Master's colors glow like Light to Magic wed.

Now while the native wanders, lost, forlorn,
O'er foreign paths of crumbling brick, the end
Of churches famed before the fatal morn,
When to their doom the tallest had to bend;
The stranger looks aghast: his footsteps wend
Their weary way in chaos' peril dark,
The scenes to hell his downward glances send,
But still the sapphire sea with white-winged bark,
His upward gaze on hill and sky, new beauty mark.

Which way, which way, oh, native son and guest,
Shall strained, dim eyes now look for chance to stay,
Which view will give the halcyon glimpse of rest?
Do we unfold our senses in the ray
Of sunset's kisses to a regal bay,
The western heaven, gorgeous, new, proclaimed,
Enchanting swirl of tropic night, and day
Of witching breeze, or has destruction aimed
To dull our sight and leave us stupid, sad and maimed?

Can Heaven protect us from an earth-born fright,
The cloudland's pictured glory stand between
An ashen empire and victims of its might?
Where all the homes of wealth now broken lean,
Bereft as empty tombs, can sweet winds mean
To send a joyous thrill redeeming pain?

Which way? Which way? Oh, who that once has seen
The playful stars and upper air, would deign
To root his glance to mud, cast on a lowly plain?

The charred remains are not unlike the past,
Whose graves are wisdom's vain research, the veil
Of death's concealment, held forever fast,
As dark to sight as this fair land, when pale
The fogs of ocean sweep o'er every dale,
And crown in filmy mist the hills' proud crest.
The sea's unburied ghosts, condemned to sail
Through roaring surf, rebelling, rush from the west,
The hidden dead by storm or fire are one at rest.

A murmur grows, a whisper tingling life,
A sense of joy vibrates through all the crowd,
The voice of hope is strangely, clearly rife;
Consigned, it seems, to dust, the ashen shroud
That cloaks the streets where bellowed fierce and loud
The avenging flame, while only hearts beat bold
With pristine strength, sublime, again too proud
To measure life by any creed or mold
But one divinely free from servile love of gold.

Freedom Once More

The West new-born seeks out a path of light,
A way clear, firm and true to lead the mind
From hopeless darkness to the fields of fight,
Where every stricken soul can purpose find
In ranks of soldiers bravely placed and lined,
To win for freedom one more telling blow.
There where the tyrant's tendrils ceaseless wind
The mighty newer man can learn to throw
The iron hammer that at last will worst the foe.

A story old as earth this frantic plea
To win the right to love without high hand
Of ruler crushing, killing fancies free;
Told oft in song, hopes of each gallant band
That stanchly raised the flag from land to land,
And died in vain to save the world from shame;
Yet still before us lie great gulfs of sand,
Forts to storm that courage may the same
Bold dash for victory make, the latest birth of fame.

With hearts high-strung by salty ocean breeze,
And spirits keyed to fight the worst of pain,
With aims as tall as Mariposa's trees,
Bathed in floods of warm and silver rain,
The arms of Nature manhood's sinews train
To struggle with the demon of dark fear,
While every step is surer, truer gain,
Against the ghouls that phantom-like appear
To strike from breast of coward man his love most dear.

Once more the bell of progress rings out clear,
With challenge begging men to live for life
Instead of trailing through their passage here,
A constant fear of slow descending knife,
A shriek at every sign of coming strife.
'Tis better far to die and gild one's tomb,
Than weak, afraid, to hide where war is rife,
And fly to cover when loud thunders loom.
The warriors of the Western shores survive their doom.

In Humility's Vale

"Nothing to give me joy," the rich man cried,
"No servants to obey my fevered call,
No royal road with princely steeds to ride,
The desert's heat and sand this new land wall."

A solo midst a million voices sounds,
One daring bird breaks through with lovely tone,
A challenge to despair, a note that bounds
Into the heart and proves it not alone.

A sudden glance from out the pathway gray
Of men condemned to solitude and work,
Reveals a garden flaming all the day
With flowers in whose depths the fairies lurk.

Still haughty, proud though hid in humble vale,
The iris waves its petals white and blue,
The poppy hints at slumber's blissful tale,
Untamed, the rose a stranger is to rue.

The clang of church-bells sharp now cuts the air,
Yon little wooden chapel greets a bride,
Her radiant tread and happy eye-beams rare,
An ecstasy unknown to wealth and pride.

With thirst long-parched, a rain-drop nectar seems.
The fog-lost wanderer hails on bended knees,
Revealings of sunlight's kindling beams,
And even jewels in a candle sees.

The sick man shouts aloud with glee when pain
Departs on noiseless wing, absorbed in mist;
Rich beauty glows for him in every lane,
However poor, he seems by pleasure kissed.

The laborer waiting for the rescue hour,
When Fortune will extend her golden hand,
Has in his hoping, longing heart a power
Denied to king by perfumed breezes fanned.

Planting the Flag

My limbs all ache, my steps grow weary, slow,
While faints my heart with arduous tug and strain,
The valley whence I started far below
The rocky height on which I stand in pain;
And far above all cloaked in gauze the fane
That I would reach seems out of mortal sight,
A summit that no frightened soul could gain.
An instant through the clouds a point of light
Reveals the distant peak, then falls the somber night.

In what mysterious time before my birth
Did I begin this steep ascent of ice?
Or am I one of those whom men of worth
Have chosen for a work above all price?
Perhaps they take my life for a chapter nice
Of the story of the ages' mighty fling
Towards self-fulfillment, their throw of giant dice
The tribes of savage men towards peace to bring.
The centuries fly past on history's lightning wing.

There are many ways for the poor old world to die,
Tyrants, bigots, fools combined with sin,
A menace ever new the strong to try,

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Appal the weak with their unceasing din;
Like fish with deadly jaws and scaly fin,
That bit by bit encroach upon the shore,
The feeble from their forts of land to win,
The ignorant and vicious ever more,
Advance in rabble wrath to break through our fastened door.

Why then, there must be some to lead the fight,
To suffer and to climb though bruised and torn,
To mount on slipping glass to prove their right
Of way and plant the flag and blow the horn
Of truth on heights by steps of men unworn.
On forever though the blood runs cold
And one stands alone of human love forlorn,
On, though funeral knells are sadly tolled,
And shadows dark and fearful every sense unfold.

Oh, no, I cannot go on, it is too hard,
My blistered face shrinks from the beating sleet,
My life at center is on its axis jarred,
I will go back, will cower and retreat.
Look down, the abyss sinks blackly at my feet;
The tocsin sounds within my brain, a bell
With music's heavenly tone my soul to greet;
My flagging courage wakens to repel
Alarm, a thrill revives the prisoner in his cell.

The thunderous heavens again an instant part,
The summit gleams much nearer than the base,
Proud Glory's beams transcendent, shining dart,
The darkness and the gloom with vim to chase
From freedom's lofty site, while leaving no trace
Of battle smoke or blood of vanquished thieves.
The curtain falls the vision to efface
Of all the splendor that my fancy weaves,
But memory as a light survives and death reprieves.

The planets nearer are to earth, it seems,
Than this fair pinnacle of snow sun-kissed,
From where I stand amid the twilight beams,
Above the yawning gulch and torrents hissed,
O'er jagged rocks like furies in the mist.
Now peering down, oh, see the people rise,
The grandsons of a mighty past, their list
Is mightier yet the topmost goal to prize.
Upward! for Liberty sings a song that never dies.

The Voice of the Infant Dead

The night was cold as prehistoric ice,
Before the sun had touched to throbbing life,
The quivering atoms made to form a slice
Of God's great mystery hurled out to strife.

But wind full-voiced like mammoth cannon throats,
Beat blustering, howling through the roofs and trees,
While Death and Thought and Time, our mortals boats,
Swayed restless iceberg-tossed upon the breeze.

I listened with an ear to music strung,
To hear what tones were played upon the harp
Of Nature sullen, bleak, to night-fays flung,
And insolent to men in anguish sharp.

And then I heard the children cry and cry,
With wailing of a pain they must express,
And every other voice was stilled, to sigh
With the little souls forlorn without a dress.

Their motherless shrieks rang out with loud protest,
Against their fate in the lonely coffin-land,
While from their shrill lament, I seemed to wrest
The reason of their flight from earth's chill strand.

"I died," one sobbed, "because I had no place
In a home where love had never been a guest,
Where I was a stranger to my mother's face
And thorns and brambles lined my cradle-nest."

"And I," another cried, "just closed my eyes,
Because I brought to her who bore me, shame,
A girl betrayed is safe when her infant dies,
And takes from her restless heart, the world's foul blame."

A tiny voice like sap in a tiny twig,
On which a daisy rears its modest head,
Gave out its plaint in sobs with suffering big,
And all the pain there is in being dead.

"I died," it piped, "to please Almighty God,
Who wished my mother for a sacrifice;
She was so good, it needed one more rod,
To prove her perfect, true beyond all price."

"She adored her child, of ardent love, the flower,
The exquisite idea in living guise,
The symbol of the great Eternal Power,
Its dying father left to her to prize.

"The human love must be torn from the human heart,
As flesh from flesh is rended by a crash
Of cavalry that die in battle-art,—
The mother must live her life a blood-red gash."

I could not sleep for the sound of the baby yells,—
The little, little ones so soon reclaimed,
From a world that commenced for them with funeral knells,
To wander even as phantoms sadly maimed.

But then on the winds of night so weird and fierce,
There rang a cry more dismal, fearful yet,—
The mothers of the infant dead must pierce
Through death for payment of their cypress debt.

They walk apart amid the festive crowds,
These women with empty arms and sterile breasts;
Do they hear like me in the stormy winds and clouds,
The baby voices whose wailing never rests?

The Welcome of the Flowers

The line of sea and sand,
That forms the northern band
Of the city straggling toward the water's waste,
Is broken rock and weed,
An edge without a seed,
No tree or plant or gem of man there placed,
To prove that Neptune's damp, fond kiss
Is meant to stir the earth to beauty drowned in bliss.

How dull both sea and earth,
In such a frigid dearth
Of tendril growths of vine that cling and climb,
Of pomp and shouting roar
Of mighty ocean hoar.
My eyes so sore without a view sublime,
I closed, then looked once more
To see what mighty robes of green the mud-banks wore.

Then springing into sight,
As from an inward light,
A thousand flowers burst upon my gaze.
To me the chorus spoke,
My senses thrilled and woke,
I listened with an ear and head adaze.
"You seem to be quite strange," they cried,
"As if you all our rare rich charm had long defied."

The buttercup in gold,
Its yellow mazes rolled,
Amid the emerald grass whose diamond dew
Was dancing in the wind.
The strawberry vines down pinned
The lupin petals veined in white and blue.
While shy, thin ferns just peeped above
Concealing greens and reds, and whispered, soft: "I love!"

A daisy raised its voice,
And said: "Come, make your choice;
If you but knew, this is the fairies' bower;
The children's perfect home,
Where merrily they roam,

And learn God's truth from every nodding flower.
No evil would they ever meet
If content they rested nestled safe in our retreat.

A clover leaf just stirred,
And quivered like a bird,
And murmured softly to my heart: "Come here!
You thought no beauty lay
In all the western day;"
Reproachfully, it sighed, and held my ear,
"'Tis true, we are near the ugly shore,
But still we boast a face of joy and teach sweet lore."

Responsively I stood,
A giant in a wood
So small I could have trampled it to dust.
My soul was touched to life,
And soothed all inward strife.
The hope and love divine I now could trust
If thus I found its gleam revealed,
With perfume piercing rare in this wild humble field.

"My little friends," I moaned,
While tears within me groaned,

"How have I lived so long without your aid?
A shining buttercup,
In my hand, I lifted up,
And pressed it to my lips, its wet face laid
Against my fevered, burning cheek.
"No more I'll wander far," I cried, "or strange gods seek."

I gathered hundreds more,
From the lavish store,
And wrapped them in the sparkling ribbon grass,
To adorn my study cold.
Ah! they were no longer bold,
But faintly called me back to their old pass
Of meadow-land unkempt, forlorn
Where first their beauty on my naked sight was born.

Cowardice and Courage

The day hung listless o'er a city dead,
All numb and cold with sense of fruitless aim,
The people walked with heavy, sodden tread,
And bowed their heads with droop of futile shame.

The black smoke curled against the threatening sky,
As if abysmal fires of earth, unborn,
Strove hard to burst their bonds and upward fly,
Black cinders hurling to deface the morn.

With conscience trembling, yet too weak to cry,
The feeble wondered why this life was hard,
They begged they knew not what with useless sigh,
While tangled thoughts confused their foreheads marred.

I walked the streets whose stones of sooty gray,
Like glacier ice my tired feet restrained,
And in the salty breeze of the limp, dull day,
The bird of beauty from love high-sung, refrained.

A vacant field around me everywhere,
Yet my spirit reached abroad like an empty hook,
To catch the flying thought that pierced the air,
The life that lives for those with eyes that look.

And lo! while yet I wandered seeking high,
The thin, aerial thing that makes a thought,
Pale Cowardice slunk with footsteps nerveless, sly,
And hid his head as one who shrinks to nought.

Why misery is a fairer growth, I mused,
As he disappeared like powder that dissolves,
While on my mind no image clear was fused,
Just fancy's form that on itself revolves.

I walked a few steps more, my heart hopes strung
From sadness, leaping forth to greet a light;
Oh! look! proud Courage on my vision flung,
A ray as white as the sun that shines at night.

Did Courage stride like a knight in armor clad,
With face clear-cut as steel and waving crest?
Ah! no! the gleam that lit his eyes was sad,
And with no laurel wreath was his helmet dressed.

It is not really brave to lead the fight,
When trumpets cheer with loud applause and roar,
When electric in the breeze love's banners bright,
And blessings from the very sky downpour.

Not thus my man of courage beamed towards me,
But from ice-heights of solitude and pain,
From a face all lined and laced, by struggle free
Of self-contempt,—sublime in anguish strain.

The day now glistened with a lustre new,
The throb of something real had hit my mind,
The grisly clouds divided into blue,
And taught me there a mirrored hope to find.

Poor Cowardice passed me by unknown, downcast,
While living glowed in strong and white relief,
The head of Courage bold in tones that last;—
I thanked my Maker for the sweet relief.

Sentiment

One of the saddest things that life can hold,
Is to find on the edge of late, believing youth,
While the heart still beats with wistfulness untold,
That beauty lingers nowhere near the truth.

The world at last when illusion's veil is torn,
Is but a book of unillumined prose,
While loyal love is but a garment worn
In fancy to protect a child from foes.

A wafer of fine-blown feeling must belong
To maids whose eyes are limpid as the sky,—
So yearns the ardent youth for Psyche's song,
And sentiment that lives to kiss or die.

And yet a face can lie with devil's vim,
Base sordid hopes behind the subtle myth,
Of what had seemed as fair as an angel's hymn;
And crumbling black decay of joy the pith.

But as youth's first deep blush begins to fade,
To the softened tint of later summer days,
And ashes pale just smoulder in passion's raid,
The ideal long-lost will vibrate in the haze.

Like filings thin of finest hammered gold,
So light they ride at ease the sunbeam's back,
There comes a sentiment our souls to mould,
To firmer grasp of what they dreamed a lack.

How all the atmosphere of mental life
Is tinged with something shining, warm and sweet,
While waves of sound with whispering love are rife,
And existence is no more a dull, old cheat!

But where does it come from and where its heart,
This zephyr of the things that ought to be,
This trembling of the exquisite, and dart,
Of spangled dragon-fly in youth's dead tree?

Oh, not in the wafted perfume of a rose,
Nor where the violets hide in ecstatic grace,
Nor where the marigolds in sunlight doze,
Nor where the passion-flower intrudes its face!

Oh, do not seek to find its secret cell,
But linger gratefully beneath its wings,
The happy subject of a mystic spell,
Who even to a moment's rapture clings!

And in experience's vision large and wide,
Is not rare sentiment itself a power?
And love a blossom fairer than all pride,
Though late and dark its birth, and short its hour?

Though in the death-damps of a life that failed,
Or behind a face with palsy's horror grim,
The heart you cannot buy has to you sailed,
On sapphire seas no later storm can dim.

If one, at last made whole, can lightly fly,
From youth's long sickness in a marsh of pain,
To a peace beyond the fear of those who die,
Then why not wait the hidden realm to gain?

From Beyond the Tomb

Tall Nerin at the feet
Of Phyllis in her retreat
Of ivy-trellised bower in the shade
Of elm and maple-tree,
Could nothing ugly see
Between his rapturous love and that sweet maid
Who turned her violet, love-kissed eyes
To him and shot a thrilling look just tempered, wise.

No palsy of remorse
Restrained him from his course.
His rival Dallis mouldered in the grave,
As helpless in his shroud
As a moving summer cloud,
Whose snowy streamers just one moment wave
Across the azure of the day,
Then disappear, dissolve, to perfect light give way.

Young Dallis too had knelt
Before the girl and felt
A throb as strong, a joy as compelling fond
As Nerin's own delight.
In lovers' modest plight
Of fear before the virgin's dazzling wand
Of beauty warm yet pure as ice,
He asked his friend to probe her heart, his own too nice.

But Nerin knew too well
Just how the balance fell
In the scales fine-wrought where Phyllis weighed the two.
A millionth of a grain,
Just for his artist brain,
And the scale had tipped for Dallis' chance, a view
That filled the rival's eyes with spleen.
He lied, and Dallis, wounded, left this mortal scene.

And now in listening mood,
She sat as Nerin wooed,
And fancied him the only one who cared,—
The one whom fate assigned
For her in bliss to bind
Unto her life, with garlands love-ensnared,

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Like the passion-vine in summer-flower
That twines about a window-edge with perfume power.

No tremor in his heart,
No guilty, sickening dart
Of conscience lurking to attack its prey,
Withheld the living man
From rapture's perfect span
Within her arms, and he leapt to catch the ray
Of answering love aflame at last.
But as he yearned towards her, he saw her face o'ercast.

Before his lips had met
Her own so dewy wet
With springs of youth unused, she sprang away,
And shrieked in anguish tone
And prayed to be awhile alone.
"See Dallis comes," she cried, "his fingers fay
Have caught my strands of hair. He clasps
His bony arms about me, and all my being grasps."

Remorse now like a snake
Long-coiled but at last awake,

Went hissing through bold Nerin's frightened brain.
The murder called for light,
It swung to human sight,
Right to the eyes he wished to shield from pain.
The hideous truth had flown with wings
From its hiding-place of death to her with poison stings.

He crouched and left her side,
Afraid to see the ghost divide
Once more sweet Phillis from her sinning swain.
She hardly seemed to note
His going in this strange float
To the spirit-world, where dead men walk and deign
Their mortal sorrow to express,
And all the unwept tears of life's brief, bitter stress.

The spirit took his place
At her feet as if to race,
Against the man of flesh in terror fled;
Then spoke in sounds so soft
They seemed from up aloft
A whisper that is dreamt not heard, then sped
To vibrate in her inner ear.
"I loved you best," he said, "and sought for you the bier."

And then poor Phyllis knew
To her sad heart's great rue,
How one had died for her and one had killed.
The one who lived was wrong,
Now silent her heart's love-song.
The widow's endless grief her bosom filled.
She stretched her hand to touch the ghost,
But in the sighing wind she was a lonely host.

Revenge from beyond the tomb,
Had made eternal gloom,
For Phyllis in the garden of her youth.
The eyes no longer kissed
By hopes of love's sweet tryst,
Turned wan with light reflected from the truth,
Where love is simply what we dream,
And hate endures beyond the Styx' cold deadly stream.

The Wooing of the Urn

Sometimes amid the blaze of desert days
When hot October suns dry-scorch the hills,
A mirage deep-blue upon my vision plays,
And vaguely, sweetly drugged, my being thrills.

When anguish flings aside its futile strain,
Repelling all the world of hideous sin,
While hope despondent sinks upon the wane,
These scenes from long-dead years my spirits win.

The blue an indigo of twilight sky,
When day and night meet in a fleeting kiss,
Just pierces through the timid trees where sigh
The winds divorced from day's long brilliant bliss.

Then through the velvet dimness of deep shades,
A weird, fond whiteness grows in frank outline,
And of the matchless scene the glamour aids,—
A marble urn my piercing eyes define.

What ashes of a mighty soul are sealed,
Within this little tomb that speaks to me?
Will the centuries' mystic secrets be revealed
And buried Rome yet struggle to be free?

You died without one last, deep, vital word;
No kindred soul was there to give an ear:
Some passion still in death relentless has stirred,
Because I come with heart to shed a tear.

And yet it cannot speak but in a throb
That knows of love the old, sweet trembling art:
Only an urn in a blue mirage, yet a sob
Breaks through the mouldering dust to touch my heart.

The blistering sand and storm of the desert rain,
Efface my sliding, shimmering astral view:
I am here mid all the Western heat and strain:
While he has gone who all my senses drew.

The sultry days and weeks aud years still sear,
The common things remain, the subtle go,
And ugliness thrusts out its maw so near,
No zephyr of the dead can to me blow.

Ah! then once more the purple darkness parts;
The wafer of an ancient loveliness
Just breaks upon my burning eyes and starts
My hopes fast spinning from our mortal stress.

Again the urn against the velvet blue,
So white it seems like sheen on fabulous pearl.
Oh, ashen fragment of a soul of rue,
In the ether can you yet a thought unfurl?

What whisper is that I fondly seem to hear?
Can a word come forth from centuries of grave?
A tone ecstatic breaks upon my ear,—
It is love that murmurs on the long sound-wave!

You waited for my heart, oh, ancient dust,
And pierced to me through all your marble doom:
Then shall I in my blank despair, yet trust
The flower of immortality will bloom?

The Appeal

Young Leonard stood alone on wind-swept cape
Sharp jutting towards the sea's onrushing tide,
Surrounded by a solitude so dense
It seemed the earth rolled back ten million years,
That he might see it once again quite new,
Unsullied by the manuscript of God
Or man. The wind, inhuman, harsh and wild,
Beat, cold, salt spray against his quivering cheek.
No comrade shot a glance of pain or love
To prove the human heart vibrated still
With music like a tender chime at dawn
That peals to show the night is but a dream,
The dark a sickness in a brain too small,
To glow with lights from sublimity's own sun.
In such a solitude to him remained
The power of thought that tried its way to burn
Across the ocean's cold and gray expanse,
And backwards where the land all sluggish lay
In silent sadness hiding from the sky.
He thought of all his youth's frustrated hope,
And stifled with the weight of memory's load.
He had strectched his arms towards love as a dying child
Who yearned to sink upon its mother's breast:

He had cried aloud in his aching, hungry soul,
As a starving beggar shrieks outside the gates
Of Paradise, fast locked against his prayer.
But no love came. Around him everywhere,
The hosts of evil seemed to reign supreme,
And malice like a plague whose scourge of black,
Draws to the grave the fairest and the best,
Made foul men's thoughts with hate and shame and lust.
A wild war-cry from some long-buried time
When his fathers' fathers fought in border strife
And plunged the knife and hurled the lance to kill,
Oft murmured in his ears: "You conquer here."
Obedient, inspired, he took the field,
And put his helmet on, advancing bold.
The foe, like myriad grains of floating chaff,
Or pollen that from a flower's heart swings out
To ride upon the breeze, escaped his blade.
Too light and insecure to fight themselves,
In very feebleness combined and swift,
They could defy his strong, straight manhood's aim.
Like a fine Arabian steed of blood and nerve,
He dashed across the burning, arid plain,
And found he raced but with himself on fire;
While smaller men but stood aside and smiled,
To see the fury of his headlong pace.
As cinders dropped from a locomotive's track,
They fled from beneath his feet and fell apart,

Unconquered and not dead, yet useless quite.
A pain so great that living was a death,
Seized heart and brain: poor Leonard looked and looked,
With eyes that ached like living coals down tossed
In boiling chasms of the nether earth,
And wondered what it all could mean or be.
The seething surf vouchsafed no cooling draught
Of knowledge to his parching forehead's front:
The sky remained a blank of staring blue
Whose vastness long-searched but made him feel more blind.
He could not die and toss the riddle back
To where so long it had hugged its mystery grim.
He did not know. Did they know more than he
Those people who had lived, then gone away
Like a drop of perfume, absorbed, dissolved, dispersed
Into the all-embracing air; a tone
Now heard, now lost in silence's baffling hold.
Could he appeal to something High, Sublime,
And pray for force to penetrate the cloud
Of doubt that loomed so black upon the land?
Should he pray? To whom? To what? Young Leonard fought
Once more with darkness' shadow in his heart.
Then raised a voice that, pure from passion's infamy,
Its strains of earnest pain sent wailing up
To the vacant Heaven where no star hung its light,
Or spelled for him in rays a signal code.
How many times he had called on human aid,

And called in vain! A boatman in a storm,
"Give me a rope; you see I sink to death,"
He had cried, but they ran the other way, unmoved.
And now he cried aloud to he knew not what.
One moment there lay upon his spirit awed,
A sanctity, a fright, —and nothing came.
Then backward rolled the curtain of the clouds,
And trembling, fine, ethereal, came a light.
The veil upon his straining eyes blew back,
And all the sea and sky gleamed glorious, white.
The mists in filmy shapes of joy divine,
Performed for him a wondrous, mystic play.
The theatre of the universe revealed
To him the magic of a thousand dreams.
His heart beat now with ecstasy new-born,
As in the perfect calm of silver sheen,
On crystal waters gleaming in the sun,
And in the trillion lights that lit the sky,
He saw a great archangel bending down
In pity, love and tenderness divine,
To prove one could not cry to God in vain.
And rapture flooded through his bursting soul,
To feel that mighty presence in the void,
To know that o'er the spent and wasteful earth,
The great stars watch in ever brooding love,
While somewhere in the great eternal Heart,
The beautiful truth sings its ecstatic song.

The Leap

The circus tent yawned large and deep and wide,
The wind-blown canvas bellowed like the tide
That hurls the plashing waves upon the beach
And threatens the far reserves of land to reach.
No volcano mouth with liquid lava red
Appeared a ring of lower hell so dread
As this amusement field to the brave young boy
Who risked his life to make a novel toy
For jaded men who liked to look at death,
And sons of wealth, who trembling, caught their breath,
And cried aloud in rapture's tingling thrill,
With clapping hands and voices hoarse and shrill,
When the acrobat took his famous flying leap,
From swing to swing across the pavilion steep.
Each time he poised upon the tall trapeze,
So high above the crowd he aimed to please,
He seemed a fly that walked the mighty dome
Of a church uplifted towards the skies of Rome,

Or a bird that weary of the nether air,
Flies through the clouds, to the human eye a glare;
He wondered even while his brain was cold,
How it would be if he should lose his hold,
And dizzy with a thought beyond control,
Should fall to earth and render up his soul,
To the multitude whose holiday he made.
A shiver o'er his tempered spirit played,
As he thought he stood alone in danger's risk,
Until one day across his work's dark disk,
There came the vision of an equal strain,
Of one more firmly yoked than he to pain.

The soldier condemned to make a swamp his home,
Where creatures of the fetid night-marsh roam,
And malaria living in a million germs,
Like a colossal demon with no terms
Of friendliness or peace, makes torment hell,
Forever heard within his ears the knell
Of death approaching swift with horrid mien,
While in his quivering heart hard duty keen,
Still thrust him forward regardless how high-priced.
A rustle of moving feet his nerve-ends sliced,—
There was a murmur in the pampas grass,

As if a troop of horse had cut a pass,
Through jungle water's slime to take the fort
The soldier held alone while Moros sought
In vain the flag from its uplifted place to tear.
He leapt to seize his gun, his face a flare
Of patriot's passion ready to advance
And meet the savage foe with shot and lance.
The murmur died, the whispering weeds grew still,
In suspense once more he watched beneath the hill.
He had not died this time, but still lived on,
To wait, to leap, to greet the fate so wan,
The black-faced warriors hold for the soldier white.
And still he wondered in the damp, hot night,
If he stood alone upon the gruesome verge,
Where perils round the lonely fighter surge.
He wondered until one day there met his gaze,
A man fast locked within a deeper maze.

The priest, like alabaster, white and pale
From fasting long and flaggellation's ail,
Stood trembling in his temple on the height
Of Himalaya's mountains snow-clad light,
While from the valley down below there rose
The mighty chorus of a world's sad woes.

"Oh, lead us master, to the shrine of God,
We wander lost amid the groves of sod",
They cried in helpless pleading on their knees,
Their sobs in dismal wailing like storm-tossed seas,
That work a thousand horrid wrecks, yet sigh
To see the pallid corpses their waves toss high.
What could he say to guide their souls aright,
To make the earth of Heaven a mirror bright?
They hung upon the word he had to give,
To him they looked for power and hope to live:
One word that lacked the nicest choice of soul,
Might send them all on downward, backward roll,
To Stygian nights of the world's first spring
From chaos to life beneath the devil's wing.
How could he leap to give the fatal word,
When Immensity itself his bosom stirred?
His heart all strangling in a mortal pain,
Seemed powerless a mighty crowd to train.
The panorama of the world revealed,
Before him lay like a mammoth book unsealed.
Should he dare to read to them the written page,
With voice commanding take the stage,
Or die while yet the word hung on his breath,

And courage grown too strong but wooed dread death?
"And if I do not speak, they die," he mused,
While on his sight the myriad lights were fused.
His soul in anguish braced to make the dive
Into the chasm where men in midnight strive.
He took the leap from earth far-swung in space,
And turned to suffering men in distraught face.

In the mighty wheel of time, there is no end,
For still in tents, the acrobat's forces spend,
Their strength in giddy risk to please the gay;
And still the soldier guards the perilous way
Where human vultures leap upon their prey,
And try to crush the flag of honest day.
And still within his lonely marble gloom,
Were unseen spirits darkling ever loom,
The priest keeps watch o'er souls of frightened hosts,
And leaps across the brink of rock-bound coasts.

The Vision of the Key

The young monk turned and tossed on his narrow bed,
While burnt unceasing in his aching brain,
The flames of madness that the sleepless know.
He pondered on the mystery called night,
That pall of nothingness where souls go out
Of being, in slumber dead as in their graves;
Unconscious as a pool of shadowed brook
That lies so deep between a cavern's walls,
No eye of man can seek a mirror there,
No lips of man can there assuage a thirst,
The sleepers pass one-half the precious time,
That God has given for the search of truth.
As sometimes a shooting star bursts through the air,
A moment flashing on the gaze surprised,
Or as sometimes from memory's attic store,
The sudden wind sweeps all the dust away,
And shows one ancient gem bright sparkling there,
So to him came a thought like comet's gleam.
He would trample under foot the slothful night,
And straining, striving while his comrades slept,

Would seek to read aright the legend strange
Of the soft sweet death men die at midnight's chime.
He vowed no thing of sense should clog his view ;
And cast from out his tiny cell of prayer,
The image of the Savior's thorn-crowned head,
The chiseled ivory cross a pope had blessed,
The Bible with all its songs of holy balm ;
While from the chambers of his brain, he cast,
The sweetest thought his soul had ever known,
The love he bore the aged priest to whom
He owed his entrance through the marble gates
To the knowledge palace pure wherein he dwelt.
A thought too sweet, though of the soul's own lace,
Might soothe the fierceness of his troubled nights,
And tempt him to forego his piercing search.
Now strangely giddy in his flight of mind,
He seemed to feel old Nature but a hoax,
A little game invented for a child ;
For gravity reversed its changeless laws,
He looked, and saw with eyes that burned through space,
His own pale image flying through the air !
No bird that ever spread its wings out wide
To fly from snow and ice to lands of bliss,

Could cleave with ease so perfect and so free,
The stretches of the boundless lifting sky,
As he, released from bondage on his bed,
To seek new truths concealed from those who sleep.
And ever as he swept aerial, light
A thousand miles a second through the blue
Of the night which throbbed to win a friend so pure,
He saw beside him, swinging like himself,
Without a thread to hold it to the earth,
Or cord or beam to attach it to the sky,
A key of brass that larger and larger seemed,
The more he looked upon its shining stem.
He longed to call in revel of ecstacy,
To the priest he loved but had banished from his heart,
"My father, we tremble on the brink of life,—
The night is dead:—and is born again on High,
We shall know at last the secrets of the sky,—
The key unlocks for us the mystery
That so long has kept men prostrate in the dark.
We enter in, just you and I, dear heart."
Still farther through the air he soared until
He seemed to hear the orchestra of Heaven,

A music so divine its lovely thrill
Was like a swoon; and nearer he approached
To the stairs of pearl shot through with opal lights.
One moment more, the door would be revealed,
His outstretched hands just touched the burnished key.
Then cold and gray from out the eastern hills,
The sad, pale dawn began once more its round,
And the monk saw but his frigid, empty cell.
While with the stir of the waking world alert
To duty's painful tasks of sightless souls,
There flamed o'er all his pallid cheek a blush;
For Heaven itself had bowed to tempt his heart
To too much joy! For himself and the one he loved
The perfect stairs as white as ice, yet live
With myriad rainbow beams of celestial fire.
"I ran from every sense of joy," he wept,
"Then drunken reeled at Heaven's great beauty throne."
When kneeling to his priest at prayer that day,
He murmured nothing of the magic key,
But simply begged for some hard work to do.

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